

GOP Plan Would Boot 50 Area Children from Program, Fire 15 Early Childhood Educators

Woodbourne, NY - After reading to area children at a local Head Start program in Woodbourne, New York, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today spoke out against federal cuts to the early childhood education program that have been proposed by the Republican majority in the U.S. House of Representatives. The \$1.1 billion dollar cut would result in the layoff of 15 early childhood educators in Sullivan County and discontinue classes for 50 children. Sullivan County Head Start enrolls 361 children and employs 87 full time staffers at two locations in Monticello and Woodbourne.

"Without Head Start, millions of children would enter kindergarten without basic educational and developmental skills needed to succeed," said Hinchey. "But instead of working to provide Head Start for all, Republicans in Washington have proposed kicking 50 kids right here in Sullivan County out of their classrooms and firing their teachers. That means one out of every seven children I read to today, may not have a classroom to come back to a few months from now. This is not the way to reduce the deficit. Education is one of the best investments we can make, because it enriches the lives of our children, allowing them to grow into being productive and successful citizens in our democracy."

"Cuts to the Head Start program would be devastating on so many levels," said Sullivan County Head Start Executive Director Bertha Williams. "Not just for the children and families we serve, but the jobs that would be lost. If the cuts go through, many of those children will have no chance for an exemplary early childhood education that Head Start provides."

Since its creation in 1965, Head Start programs have served over 27 million children. Statewide, the House Republican cut would mean removing nearly 12,000 New York children from the Head Start program, while eliminating 3,500 jobs and terminating over 900 hundred classes. Nationally, a cut of \$1.1 billion would eliminate 218,000 kids from Head Start and would close 16,000 classrooms. While the program receives \$7.2 billion in annual funding, the proposed cuts would occur immediately. Instead of being spread over the course of a year, these cuts would be absorbed in a 6 month time frame, cutting the current operating budgets for Head Start programs by approximately 25 percent.

Head Start is only one of several education programs targeted by Republicans. Cuts to special

education, teacher improvement programs and science and math education were also included in the Republican spending bill. Pell Grants, one of the most important programs to help students pay for college, and the TRIO program, another important program that provides support services to disadvantaged students, are also slated for cuts.

The cuts were initially proposed as part of a Republican spending bill, H.R. 1, designed to fund the government for the remainder of the fiscal year. Hinchey voted against the proposed legislation because of cuts to Head Start and other vital programs that economists say will slow economic growth, costing up to 1 million jobs. The bill ultimately passed in the U.S. House but was rejected by the Democratically controlled U.S. Senate. A temporary spending bill was passed to fund the federal government until March 18 followed by an additional temporary measure that expires on April 8. To avoid a government shutdown, a new spending bill must be signed into law within the next two weeks. Cuts to Head Start will continue to be a point of contention as lawmakers work to negotiate a final package.